

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims:**

Claim 1 (currently amended): An absorbent article comprising:

a liquid absorbent layer (4), the absorbent article having a skin surface and a garment surface;~~wherein~~

compressed grooves, (11)~~where~~ the liquid absorbent layer (4) is compressed and recessed from ~~the~~ a side of the skin surface toward the garment surface, ~~are~~ being provided to extend in a longitudinal direction of the article, the compressed grooves (11) being located laterally apart from a longitudinal centerline (~~Oy-Oy~~) of the article, a separation distance between the compressed grooves (11) being smallest on a lateral reference line (~~Ox-Ox~~) of the article or within a range of an equal distance forward and rearward from the lateral reference line (~~Ox-Ox~~) in the longitudinal direction;~~wherein~~ and

a rear flexible portion, (16) where the liquid absorbent layer (4) is recessed from the side of the garment surface toward the skin surface, is being provided to extend toward a rear end edge (14) of the article from a starting point (16a) that is located closer to the rear end edge (14) than the lateral reference line (~~Ox-Ox~~), at least a portion of the rear flexible portion (16) being located between the compressed grooves (11).

Claim 2 (currently amended): An absorbent article as set forth in claim 1, wherein a front flexible portion, (15) where the liquid absorbent layer (4) is also recessed from the side of the garment surface toward the skin

surface<sub>2</sub> is provided to extend toward a front end edge (1e) of the article from a starting point (15a) that is located closer to the front end edge (1e) than the lateral reference line (Ox-Ox), at least a portion of the front flexible portion (15) being located between the compressed grooves (11), wherein

the front and rear end edges (1e, 1d) are located an equal distance apart from the lateral reference line (Ox-Ox), and the front and rear flexible portions (15, 16) are also located an equal distance apart from the lateral reference line (Ox-Ox).

Claim 3 (currently amended): An absorbent article as set forth in claim 2, wherein the compressed grooves (11) and the front and rear flexible portions (15, 16) are formed in a pattern symmetrical about the lateral reference line (Ox-Ox).

Claim 4 (currently amended): An absorbent article as set forth in claim 1, wherein within a range of an equal distance forward and rearward from the lateral reference line (Ox-Ox) in the longitudinal direction, additional compressed grooves (17) are provided side by side with the compressed grooves (11).

Claim 5 (currently amended): An absorbent article as set forth in claim 1, wherein a mean thickness of the absorbent article at both sides of the rear flexible portion (16) is smaller than that at a region extending an equal distance forward and rearward from lateral reference line (Ox-Ox) in

the longitudinal direction but not overlapping with the rear flexible portion (16).

Claim 6 (currently amended): An absorbent article as set forth in claim 1, wherein pressure-sensitive adhesive layers (19) for adhering the article to an undergarment are disposed on the garment surface, the pressure-sensitive adhesive layers (19) being located laterally apart from the longitudinal centerline (~~Oy-Oy~~) and present at least on the lateral reference line (~~Ox-Ox~~) and on both sides of the rear flexible portion (16).